

ADDENDUM
to the
Citizen Science Framework Review:
Informing a Framework for Citizen Science within
the US Fish and Wildlife Service

An Addendum to the Independent Science Review
conducted for the Consensus Building Institute
on behalf of the US Institute
by Jennifer Shirk and Rick Bonney, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Final Version: 30 November 2015

See primary document:

Shirk J, Bonney R. 2015. Citizen Science Framework Review: Informing a Framework for Citizen Science within the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY.

ADDENDUM

Our role in conducting the Independent Science Review has been to inform the process of developing a framework for citizen science in the US Fish and Wildlife Service in light of the best available knowledge and cutting edge developments in the larger field. With that in mind, we make the following recommendations for next steps.

1. Revisit CBI interview data

While there is a wealth of resources in the broader field that can be drawn upon, the best available knowledge sometimes comes from within. It became clear through this process that there is a real diversity of needs and interests in citizen science across the range of people working for this agency. CBI captured such details, in early interviews and a survey – for example, the understanding that headquarters staff may seek resources for training and management where field staff may require resources to ensure data validity. Some of those insights informed the Fort Collins workshop and the subsequent design of a framework. We suggest that a secondary look at those data can further help inform Phase 2 work, particularly with the known need to organize framework information in relevant and accessible ways for different audiences.

2. Consider building on the Federal Community of Practice Toolkit

The process of developing a framework for USFWS citizen science has capitalized on a wealth of individual efforts and insights. To maximize investment in this process, before moving into Phase 2 it is worth first doing a critical review of the new Toolkit developed by the Federal Community of Practice for Citizen Science and Crowdsourcing. We, as well as some members of the planning team, have helped to pilot test this resource, and our assessment is that it offers resources that parallel some of the needs defined in Phase 1 work on this project.

With an eye to efficiency, it is worth taking a look at this Toolkit in relationship to the Framework that was drafted through all our hard work in Fort Collins. If this Toolkit would serve the basic needs of the USFWS, which we suspect that it will, investments can be focused around building out complementary resources that are specific to the needs of this agency and that could customize the use of that Toolkit for USFWS personnel.

3. Build case studies of USFWS citizen science

There are success stories of citizen science design and implementation within this agency, as well as projects that have learned lessons the hard way. Much can be learned through case studies that document the processes and circumstances that have helped these projects work well in their setting, and by considering how that knowledge can be transferred to other USFWS contexts.

A systematic review of projects can help demonstrate the diversity of citizen science approaches, and can also help document the contributions that citizen science has made towards different agency goals. We would recommend an inclusive approach, being sure to consider community-based monitoring initiatives as well as the development or use of top-down projects such as eBird. As two additional benefits, case studies can serve as an interface to help guide people into the most relevant parts of existing tools such as the Toolkit, and can also serve to showcase USFWS projects, innovations, and successes to others in the federal community and beyond.

4. Develop a basic internal training tool for staff

While we advocate for an inclusive approach for case studies and understanding the breadth of work going on within USFWS, we suggest that it is useful in parallel to also present a unified front regarding the value of citizen science within the agency. A basic tool such as a powerpoint or a YouTube video could be developed to help communicate to agency staff about what citizen science is, how it can be used, the wealth of examples and resources available – possibly even how to get started. There are not many good examples of this, although we can point to a few developed for other purposes that could be considered as jumping off points. If resources allow and a need is understood, this idea could be further fleshed out into developing a series of training sessions. The National Park Service is working on a training series for staff along these lines, which may be available for other agencies or which might be used as a model to develop custom trainings.

Closing thoughts:

- ∅ Understand what is valued and what is of concern (from the interviews)
- ∅ Share strategies and resources for addressing concerns (through case studies)
- ∅ Appreciate and build on the “grease and glue” role of the agency as a whole in making citizen science do-able